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**Cherifi, B., Smith, A., Maitland, R. and Stevenson, N.**

This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Cherifi, B., Smith, A., Maitland, R. and Stevenson, N. (2018) Beyond image: Imagined experiences of a destination, *International Journal of Tourism Research*, doi: 10.1002/jtr.2227, which has been published in final form at:

<https://dx.doi.org/10.1002/jtr.2227>

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## **Beyond Image: Imagined Experiences of a Destination**

### **Abstract**

The aim of this study is to explore the idea that people can imagine themselves in a destination and can have imagined experiences. This broadens our understanding of how people think about destinations and provides an extension of the established destination image literature, and that which explores actual tourist experiences. The research involved asking 300 Czech residents who had never been to London to imagine what it would be like to visit. Their responses were examined qualitatively using thematic analysis. The findings suggest that people can imagine experiences and that these involve a range of sensations; much like 'real' experiences.

Keywords: Destination image; destination marketing; imagined experience; tourist experience; sensory

### **1. Introduction**

The literature on how individuals imagine destinations is dominated by studies of destination image, which remains one of the most popular themes in tourism research (Dioko, 2016; Kislali, Kavartzis and Saren, 2016; Pike, 2002). Image is widely recognized to be a key factor in the decision-making processes that determine tourist behaviour (e.g. Ban and Özdoğan, 2010; Selby, 2004). However, especially in the current climate when destinations are competing more intensely to attract visitors, it is important to look beyond narrow conceptions of destination image to understand how destinations are imagined more broadly (Salazar, 2012). Imagined experiences of a destination have been neglected in tourism studies that tend to regard images as static and visual, rather than active and multi-sensory

phenomena. Experiences are acknowledged as a key to understanding tourism (Cohen, 1979; McCabe, 2002; Richards and Wilson, 2006; Ryan, 2000), but we know very little about if and how tourist experiences are imagined. How individuals think about destinations affects demand for tourism - and understanding demand is the key to effective marketing (Goel, 2017). Also, there is currently a clear shift from a features benefits approach toward consumer experiences in marketing (Schmitt, 2015), providing a further justification for this study.

The aim of this paper is to explore the proposition that people can imagine themselves in a destination and have imagined experiences. By addressing this aim, the study explores the concept of imagined experiences and identifies its core components. The focus of the paper is whether these images exist and what they consist of, rather than how they are formed. These objectives are addressed by analysing what non-visitors imagine it would be like to experience London. This paper contributes to conceptual understanding by providing an alternative interpretation of how places are imagined – one that goes beyond established notions of images and imaginaries. By applying ideas from marketing, anthropology and tourism studies, this paper discusses how the concept of imagined experiences extends our understanding of how people think about destinations. The study culminates in a set of implications for tourism planning and management.

## **2. Imagined Experiences**

### **2.1 Imaginaries and the imagination**

Imagined experiences are linked to both imaginaries and imagination. According to Salazar (2012), imaginaries are socially transmitted representational assemblages that interact with people's personal imagining and are used as meaning-making and world-shaping devices. Salazar and Graburn (2014, p.2) assert, "by their very nature, imaginaries remain intangible,

so the only way to study them is by focusing on the multiple conduits through which they pass and become visible in the form of images and discourses”. Several studies have also investigated tourism and imaginaries (Chronis, 2012; Forsey and Low, 2014), and this seems to be a growing area of research. According to Salazar (2013, p.3), “empowered by mass-mediated master narratives, such imaginaries have become global. They are sent, circulated, transferred, received, accumulated, converted and stored around the world”. Imaginaries are thus of utmost importance to how places are conceived; and the conception (rather than merely the perception) of place helps to explain how tourist destinations are imagined.

Imaginaries should not be confused with imagining, the process through which we think of things other than through direct perception. Like dreaming and fantasizing, imagination is an example of “non-perceptual-awareness” (Ingold, 2012, p.6). Various studies have attempted to link tourism with imagination (e.g. Crouch, Jackson and Thompson, 2005; Lean, Staiff and Waterton, 2016; Skinner and Theodossopoulos, 2011). Imagination has also been explored more generally by Ingold (2012) who stresses the active position of individuals in imagining, as opposed to imaginaries which are socially produced: “To imagine, we suggest, is not so much to conjure up images of reality out there, whether virtual or actual, true or false, as to participate from within, through perception and action, in the very becoming of things” (2012, p.3). Literary images are examples of imagined experiences. For example, Ziolkowski (1981, cited in Stambovsky, 1988) suggests that various types of sensations are stimulated when one reads a literary piece such as a novel or poem. Novels may be the product of, and stimulus for, someone’s imagination, but they also feature imagined places.

## 2.2 Experiences and expectations of experiences

To understand imagined experiences it is necessary to understand tourist experiences more generally. The sensory aspect of experiences has been explored by many authors (including Agapito, Mendes and Valle, 2014; Dann and Jacobsen, 2003), although the visual aspect is still prominent (Kirillova, Fu, Lehto and Cai, 2014). According to Trandberg, Scarles and Cohen (2015), multisensory experiences are integral to travelling; their research focused on the study of rhythms, sounds and temperatures on inter-rail experiences. Food tourism is also a growing area of experiential research (Hall and Sharples, 2011; McKercher, Okumus and Okumus, 2008). However “further research is needed in order to more deeply understand the role of the sensory in tourist experiences” (Agapito et al., 2014, p. 235).

Authors have used different conceptual frames to study tourist experiences. They have been explored via confirmation-disconfirmation theory, importance–evaluation approaches, involvement theory, theories of liminality, role play approaches, the theory of the Gaze, the search for authenticity, theories of consumerism, of mindlessness, the travel career ladder, how we experience holiday time, theories of intimacy, theories of flow and arousal, and other theories (Ryan, 2010). A number of models of tourist experiences also exist – for example Quan and Wang’s (2004) structural model suggests that the same element can be either a ‘peak’ touristic experience or a supporting one, depending on the individual circumstances. Govers and Go (2009) suggest that experiences involve the mind, emotions, active participation or passive gazing and social interaction as well. The “dynamic and evolutionary nature of the tourist experience...caused by the bricolage of encounters before, during and after the trip” is recognized by Chen, Prebensen and Uysal (2014, p.14) and the memorability (Wing Sun Tung and Brent Ritchie, 2011) and emotional (Lin, Kerstetter, Nawijn and Mitas, 2014) aspects of experiences are also discussed in recent texts.

Experiences display perpetual novelty –no two experiences are exactly the same - but to help makes sense of them we need to organize them into different types (Schmitt, 1999b). Schmitt’s (1999a) categorization identifies realms of experience and identifies five strategic experience realms: the sensory (how the individual uses their senses during the experience) which includes consideration of all of the five senses. There is the affective realm (what the individual feels during the experience), and the creative cognitive realm (how the individual thinks during the experience). Then there are the physical behaviours and lifestyles realm (how the individual acts during the experience), and the social identity realm (what the individual relates to during his experience). This study is of particular interest due to the categorization of experiences, and it has been used to frame the discussion of results later in the paper.

Clawson and Knetch (1966) cited in Cutler and Carmichael (2010) state that a tourist experience has five phases which influence each other: anticipation, travel to site, onsite activity, return to travel and recollection. According to Cutler and Carmichael (2010), the current research around experiences revolves mostly around the evaluated experience, and there is less attention devoted to the moment-by-moment lived experience. However, there is an emerging body of leisure research on this theme (Wilks, 2015; Stevenson and Farrell, 2017). Cutler and Carmichael (2010) propose a model suggesting realms of experience in regards to experience formation. These authors state that: “There is limited research combining the dimensions of tourist experience, that which does exist uses frameworks based on the phases of the experience, the influences of the experience, or on important criteria or outcomes of the experience” (Cutler and Carmichael, 2010, p. 6), adding to the justification for our research.

Tourist expectations are also important to this study as they also influence how individuals think about and experience destinations (Chen and Phou, 2013; Pizam and Milman, 1993; Santos, 1998; Turner and Reisinger, 1999; Wang, Qu and Hsu, 2016). Skinner and Theodossopoulos (2011) state that expectation “plays a fundamental role in shaping the tourist experience in determining its success or failure” (2011, p.3). Expectations are normally assessed by SERVQUAL, a model that is designed to measure consumers’ expectations and perceptions concerning a specific service. It measures tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy (Fick and Brent Ritchie, 1991).

### 2.3 Imagined experiences and destination images

Whilst imagined experiences of a destination have not been explored directly in the literature, the related concept of destination image certainly has. New studies on destination image are constantly emerging (Avraham, 2015; Chen, Lai, Petrick, and Lin, 2016; Fu, Ye, Xiang, 2016; Styliadis, 2016; Zhang, Fu, Cai, Lu, 2014). In fact, “there has been exponential growth in the number of studies of destination image appearing in the tourism literature” (Pike and Ryan, 2004, p.333), a trend that has continued over the past decade. Image is known to influence the selection of holiday destinations, a topic that has been researched by many authors in the past (Baloglu and Mcleary, 1999). Destination images consist of cognitive aspects, affective aspects, evaluative aspects and conative aspects. Cognitive aspects relate to what individuals know about the destination, conative aspects relate to propensity to visit the destination, evaluative aspects are concerned with the expression of an opinion, and affective aspects relate to how they feel towards the destination (Gartner, 1993; Richards and Wilson, 2004). There is recognition of the need to research the images of visitors and non-visitors - to capture the ways images are formed through secondary sources, alongside those influenced by direct visitation (Styliadis and Cherifi, 2018).

Within the enormous amount of literature available on destination image, Prayag (2007) suggests that the multi-sensory elements of destination images have been neglected. More recent image studies by Aziz et al. (2014), Huang and Gross (2010), Dițoiu and Caruntu (2014) and Stăncioiu, Dițoiu, Teodorescu, Onișorand and Pârgaru (2014) acknowledge that destination images involve multiple senses (auditory, olfactory and gustatory), not merely the visual element that the word image implies. By examining image as more than a simplistic notion, this type of image research has parallels with the idea of imagined experiences. According to Aziz (2014), individuals have sensory associations of Turkey that relate to the country's smells, tastes, sounds and sights. Huang and Gross (2010) suggest that visitors have more multi-sensory images than non-visitors on the basis that they are exposed to the environment in person.

### **3. Method**

This study explored imagined experiences of London held by Czech non-visitors – people who had never been to the city. It is grounded in the work of Govers, Go and Kumar (2007a) who asked participants to imagine what their visits might be like, thus exploring and analysing their imagined experiences. London is the world's second most visited city and is known even by people who have never been there (Maitland and Newman, 2009). This makes it ideal for the present study which aimed to analyse the imagined experiences of people who had never been to a destination (i.e. non-visitors). Limiting the study to non-visitors guaranteed that any 'experiences' of London elicited would be entirely imagined. The Czech Republic was selected as the location where research participants were recruited, mainly because the lead researcher was Czech, but also because very little research concerning Czech tourists was found.



Even though this is a qualitative study, the aim was to ensure rigour in terms of numbers of participants and sampling strategies, in line with a phenomenographic approach. A self-completion questionnaire - with open-ended questions adapted from Govers et al.'s (2007a) research instrument - was used to collect data. Participants were asked to write what they thought their experiences of London would be like and what they expected to feel, see, hear, smell or taste. They were asked to write everything that came to mind using full sentences and were advised that there was no right, wrong or best model answer. The same written research instrument was used for all participants and quota sampling (with respect to age groups) was adopted to obtain a broadly representative sample of the adult Czech population (based on data from ČSÚ, 2009). This was particularly important in this case, where citizens of a certain age have lived under very different political systems (e.g. pre, during and post Communism). The research instrument was refined following two pilot studies.

Overall, 300 responses written in Czech were obtained from within three different case study areas within the Czech Republic. The aim was to gather information from a large number of people, and 300 was the maximum sample size possible given resource and practical constraints. Involving a large number of people in the research helped to maximize the reliability of the findings and helped to align the research to the phenomenographic approach advocated by Govers et al. (2007a). These three sites were deliberately selected to give an appropriate range of locations: one was a rural area (the villages of Českomoravská and Vrchovina), one a town (Kolín) and the other a capital city (Prague). It was important to include individuals from different areas of the Czech Republic in order to get a (more) representative sample of imagined experiences, as previous research indicates that residents of rural, urban and metropolitan areas in the Czech Republic hold different tourism-related

attitudes (Eurobarometer, 2009). The case study areas representing rural, urban and metropolitan areas were selected on a convenience basis to suit the above categories and also to ensure their geographical spread within the Czech Republic. People were only included in the sample if they had never visited London and efforts were made to generate a sample that was representative of adult Czechs according to different age groups. In each area the lead researcher recruited: 31 participants aged between 18 and 34; 34 aged between 35 to 54; and 35 aged 55 and over. In terms of socio-economic status, 14.7% were in manual employment, 39.3% were in non-manual employment, 29.7% were not working or on maternity leave and 16.4% did not state. In terms of education, 1% had basic education, 62.7% had secondary school, A-level, colleges or NVQ, 17.7% had university degree and 18.6% did not state.

The written accounts collected were obtained in libraries and translated from the Czech language into English. The translation was conducted by the lead researcher, a native Czech speaker who speaks fluent English. Thematic analysis was then used to assess the very large amount of data collected. Thematic analysis is commonly used in qualitative studies; for example it is used by Hughes and Allen (2008) and Ritchie and Spencer (1994). This thematic framework included the following stages: “familiarization, identifying a thematic framework, indexing, charting, mapping and interpretation” (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994: p.178). Thematic analysis of this robust data was appropriate because, although the responses varied in their length, they were characteristically rich in detail. The process of analysis was influenced by the researcher’s own subjective interpretation, but attempts were made to minimize bias as three other researchers assisted in the identification of themes in order to test the credibility of interpretation. The specific codes and themes identified in this study are presented in the results chapter.

#### **4. Results**

The findings suggest non-visitors have imagined experiences and that these include a range of sensory elements. However, the dominance of visual imagined experiences over other types of sensory images was clear. Almost all participants expressed inherently visual imagined experiences and, even though none of the participants had been to London, the vast majority could imagine what the city looked like. Participants tended to mention the appearance of individuals, often in a rather antiquated way: for example ‘top-hats’ were identified by participant 68, participant 214 noted ‘around me there will be Englishmen sitting there in long coats’ and participant 225 mentioned, ‘people holding umbrellas’. Despite their lack of direct experience of the city, participants envisioned specific details about the environment such as ‘fences: small metal fences’ (participant 225). Famous attractions were mostly linked with the sense of sight rather than with any other sense. For example, one participant suggested they ‘will see Tower Bridge ... and a lot of other interesting places that we discussed ... at school’ (participant 122).

Smells of London were apparent in the imagined experiences elicited. Individuals imagined the smells of people in London: for example, ‘on the streets, nice and not obtrusive fragrances of perfumes of passing women and men’ (participant 245). Participants also imagined smells of the environment of everyday life such as ‘nice smells in the zones only for pedestrians with coffees’ (participant 242), ‘the smell of rain’ (participant 21), and ‘the smell of roses’ (participant 36). People associated London with the smells of a city in general. In particular, participant 108 mentioned, ‘I would probably smell the cars, because I imagine a big [amount of] traffic’. Participants acknowledged that places smell differently. Participant 246 stated, ‘every place has its specific fragrance, for example Holland smells of soil and agriculture, Greece of citrus fruit and olives, I am curious, how the air in London will smell’.

Many participants also imagined the smells of the local food - participant 6 mentioned, 'the typical smell of fried "Fish and Chips"'. Whilst some mentioned 'a lot of smells' (participant 187), some responses by non-visitors seemed tentative or indistinct - for example, 'fragrances of unknown types of spices and cheeses' (participant 245). It is important to note that others did not state any olfactory images (for example participant 60).

Gustatory references represent another type of sensation closely linked with olfactory experiences. Participant 50 commented, 'I would like to taste some typical English dish and beer'. Some imagined gustatory experiences were linked to personal interests, for example participant 207 pictured, 'my big hobby is cooking and I like to eat some good dishes. That is why I would also be interested in this way of eating'. Not all participants could imagine a full range of senses, and not everyone imagines taste. For example participant 41 stated, 'regarding food, I cannot imagine anything'.

Unlike the visual or olfactory elements, imagined experiences did not seem to include many tactile imagined experiences. Where the 'feel' of London was mentioned, it was usually in reference to rainy weather, for example participant 227 stated, 'I will definitely feel the rain because in London it rains very often'. Participant 21 wrote about, 'rainy weather that would now cool me down'. This reaffirms that one of the tactile imagined experiences of a destination is that of London's climate; a number of participants mentioned that they would experience 'relatively warm weather'.

Imagined auditory experiences were also apparent, for example participant 12 imagined 'Big Ben and the characteristic sound of bells'. People imagined the sounds of everyday life for example, 'on the streets the bells of the double-deckers can be heard' (participant 263), the

'beeping sounds of the cars' (participant 242) and, as participant 226 put it, 'I will ... hear the bustle and confusion of the city'. Some imagined hearing people talking in unfamiliar languages: 'I will hear foreign language' (participant 66). Several people imagined music. One participant (211) mentioned the diversity of the music that he imagined hearing in London, 'I will hear music of all continents'. Participant 211 mentioned that, 'On the radio I hear the Beatles'.

More intangible feelings about London were also present in the dataset. Positive feelings were expressed by participant 37 who wrote, 'but with the time ... (I will) feel the joy of getting to know new things'. Participant 117 declared that, 'I will enjoy my trip and I will be enthusiastic about new things'. Other participants used rather negative descriptors to express how they would feel such as, 'unsure or insecure' (participant 201), 'confused' (participant 96). Participant 210 had mixed feelings, 'firstly, we will be scared of the unknown, but I believe that soon we will get used to it and probably even fall in love with London'. Another aspect imagined as being felt by the participants is the atmosphere - 'during my first visit to London I would try as far as possible, to slowly feel the atmosphere of the city, its style and in a way also its fragrances, everything that our ancestors called the spirit of the time' (participant 84). A distinct feeling of being distant from home was also mentioned 'one will also have a strange feeling about the fact that Czech Republic is so far away' (participant 61). A few participants however did not have particular feelings about their imagined experience. For example, participant 297 communicated, 'I do not know how I would feel there. I have never been there'.

One's own physical behaviour was noted to be a key aspect of imagined experiences. For example, walking and wandering were commonly cited behaviours: 'I will walk through the

centre' (participant 214), 'I will walk in the streets and look for the things that I would like' (participant 35 'I will just wander around' (participant 163). Engagement in typical tourist behaviours was also imagined. Perhaps unsurprisingly - as participants were describing an unfamiliar place - the role of maps and way finding was mentioned by several participants such as participant 144. Participant 224 visualized, 'with the map in my hand ... I would ask those passing around me for advice to find the right place'.

One's perceived social identity was also a part of the imagined experiences. Participant 67 envisioned that he would adopt the tourist identity: 'as a tourist I will visit London in the near future and I will bring experiences that I will remember for years'. Linguistic challenges were also present in the imagined experiences elicited. Participant 215 said, 'for example we do not speak English here and I am not particularly strong in English'. Participant 29 wrote that he would 'feel as a foreigner'.

What individuals imagine they will be thinking during their visit is another important dimension of imagined experiences. For example, thinking about history was identified by participant 246 who would, 'imagine what happened in that particular place where I am over the course of long centuries'. The way that individuals think at the destination also relates to what their imagined experiences would be. Some included evaluations of how they will perceive people in London. Participant 245 mentions, 'on the streets ... passing women and men, well-groomed and with decent clothes'. Table 1 below summarizes components of imagined experiences, in particular themes and codes identified in this study.

(Table 1 to be inserted in here)

## **Discussion**

It is important to discuss the relationship between the imagined experiences described here and more established ideas about destination image. The findings of this study suggest that image seems to be a platform on which imagined experiences are based- as the realms of the imagined experiences are linked to images people hold of the destination. For example, imagined feelings at the destination could be linked with the affective components of destination image (Gartner, 1993; Richards and Wilson, 2004). Imagined thinking at the destination is linked to evaluative images, how people evaluate the destination (Gartner, 1993; Richards and Wilson, 2004). Imagined experiences are also based on cognitive images, what individuals know about the destination (Gartner, 1993; Richards and Wilson, 2004).

A range of sensations - olfactory, auditory, tactile, visual and gustatory – were all included in imagined experiences of London. This is in line with destination image studies that emphasize the importance of sensory destination images (Gretzel and Fesenmaier, 2003; Govers et al., 2007b). Sheenan (1967) pointed out that not just vision, but all the senses can be imagined, and this has been reaffirmed by the imagined experiences elicited by this study. Sight is traditionally perceived as the most seductive sense and the most obvious one (Kennedy, 2008, cited in Pawaskar and Goel, 2014) and it was the one that was most commonly stated in participants' imagined experiences. Olfactory imagined experiences were also present in this study. This is in line with Govers et al.'s (2007b) findings which revealed that tourists imagine smells of spices, the smell of heat, fragrances and smells of food. In regards to experiences, taste and smell are closely connected. Imagined sounds also feature in the dataset. This reflects the work of Carles et al. (1992) which showed that even though mental images are considered to be mainly visual, sound can be just as important. Kosslyn et

al. (2006) asserted that tactile imagery is accompanied by the experience of feeling with the mind's skin. The sense of touch is discussed in the literature as a haptic perception (Krishna, 2010; Krishna 2012) which was evident in this study, although less apparent than other senses.

The findings reveal that imagined experiences seem to be more personalized and richer than conventional destination images – and have many more components as well. Imagined experiences also differ from images in that they also include additional realms that are under researched in the existing literature –imagined physical behaviour at the destination, one's perceived social identity, and how individuals think during an imagined experience.

Schmitt's (1999a) experience categorization (further discussed in Schmitt, 2000), designed for real and not imagined experiences in the marketing domain, can be applied to imagined tourist experiences. Indeed, Schmitt's ideas are very useful for identifying the components of imagined experiences. However, on an individual level, not everyone exhibits all the components - some people imagine more vividly than others. This is in line with Ryan's (2000, p. 119) position on real experiences: "they are essentially individualistic, although it is possible to discern consensual realities". There are also elements of Schmitt's framework that are less apparent in imagined experiences such as what people are thinking during their imagined experience.

## **5. Conclusions**

The concept of imagined experiences explored in this study broadens our understanding of how people think about destinations beyond conventional analyses of destination image. All of Schmitt's (1999a) categories were found to be present in the imagined experiences elicited



from Czech non-visitors. However, not everyone exhibited all the types of experiences suggesting that some people are more imaginative than others, and that some people imagine differently than others. The research showed that the sensory realm of imagined experiences is particularly rich and complex. As might have been expected, the visual played an important role in how experiences were imagined, yet all the senses were important as sounds, smells, tastes and touch were described by participants. People also imagine their own physical behaviour, their imagined perceived social identity, what they would think at the destination and how they might feel.

An understanding of how we think about places that goes beyond image and imaginaries has a number of managerial implications for the planning and management of tourism. One key managerial implication is for destination marketing. A variety of *creative marketing techniques* can be developed to promote destinations that focus not only on the visual aspect, but a whole spectrum of sensory elements. Employing these techniques could add to the competitiveness of destinations, as it is recognized that “a key challenge for destination marketers is to ‘cut through’ the noise of competing and substitute products to attract the attention of the consumer-traveller” (Pike and Ryan, 2004, p. 334). Another managerial implication is in the area of *tourism innovation*. Understanding demand in depth is essential for innovation in the tourism industry (Hall and Williams, 2008). Analysing imagined experiences before visits occur, as a way of understanding potential demand, could assist tourism product development in destinations. It can also help destination managers develop a better understanding of under-exploited markets. Based on the imagined experience categories identified in this study, tourism marketing strategies can incorporate these. As Schmitt (1999b) suggests, rather than being concerned with any particular individual experiences, managers need to ask themselves the more important strategic questions of what

types of experiences they want to provide, as the key purpose of marketing is to create a valuable customer experience, resulting in loyal customers that are ready to pay more (Schmitt, 1999b).

This study has a number of limitations and a number of recommendations for further research stem from these. Our work was restricted to imagined experiences of a major city. Other aspects of imagined experiences might be present for other types of destinations, such as rural destinations or seaside resorts. Also, this is a qualitative study, so whilst it was possible to explore the concept and its components, as stated in the aims, the commonality of components of imagined experiences was not assessed and is yet to be explored in future research. Even though this was beyond the scope of the study, it would also be interesting to investigate how these imagined experiences are created.

This research provides a platform for further exploration of how people imagine places as tourist destinations, beyond destination images. The findings here are directly related to established knowledge regarding destination image. The main components of destination image as described in the literature, e.g. cognitive, affective, evaluative, as well as sensory images are present in imagined experiences. These are much broader and richer in content than destination images, and they include additional components. Accordingly, it could be argued that the idea of destination image reduces the complex ways that people imagine destinations to over-simplistic attributes. This raises the question of whether imagined experiences of the destination are more important than images in determining tourist behaviour. Now we know that imagined experiences exist, and what they consist of, more research is needed to understand what role they play in tourism. In particular, it would be useful to better understand what role imagined experiences have in the decisions individuals

make, and, as “human imagination helps produce our sense of reality” (Salazar, 2013, p.6), to explore further how imagined experiences then shape the real experiences at the destination. This study focused on non-visitors so that imagined experiences could be isolated. However, imagination is a continuing process, and does not stop once we have perceived the destination in person. As Ingold (2012, p.6) states “perceiving and imagining may be quite different but they have in common that they do not begin with a stimulus input and end with an image. Rather they carry on”.

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Themes	Codes
Visual imagined experiences	Visualising people
	Visualising the tourist environment
	Visualising the everyday environment
Olfactory imagined experiences	Smells of people
	Smells of the environment
Gustatory imagined experiences	Taste of food
Tactile imagined experiences	Feeling the rain
	Feeling the weather
Imagined sounds experience	Sounds of the iconic buildings
	Sounds of the city
	Music

Imagined feelings	Evaluations as to how pleasant
	State of mind
	Atmosphere
Imagined physical behaviour	Walking
	Wandering around
	Engagement in physical tourist activities
Imagined perceived social identity	Adoption of the tourist identity
	Language barrier
Imagined thinking at the destination	Thinking about history of the place
	Evaluations of people
	Evaluations of environment

Table 1: Components of imagined experiences